A SUGGESTED SET OF CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF STUDENT-TEACHING CENTERS IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

BY

JAMES CHRISTIAN ATHERTON

B.S., Louisiana State University, 1935
M.S., Louisiana State University, 1947
Ed.M., University of Illinois, 1949

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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A SUGGESTED SET OF CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF STUDENT TEACHING CENTERS IN VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

The absence of a defensible standard for the selection of student-teaching centers, the virtually universal attitude among teacher trainers that student teaching is one of the most important activities, if not the most important, in the undergraduate program of prospective teachers, and a desire on the part of the writer to improve the selection of schools to be used as student-teaching centers led to an investigation of what should be considered when a center is being selected.

The purposes of the study were to:

1. Determine present methods of selecting student-teaching centers in vocational agriculture and to determine the opinions of teacher trainers concerning these methods.

2. Determine the opinions of a jury of educators relative to a tentative set of criteria for the selection of student-teaching centers in vocational agriculture.

3. Develop a suggested set of criteria for the selection of student-teaching centers in vocational agriculture.

Student teaching is defined as that period in the undergraduate program of the teacher-training institutions in which students, usually seniors, spend an extended period of time observing and participating in the activities and duties of regularly employed teachers of vocational agriculture in high schools selected for this purpose.

A *student-teaching center* is a high school department of vocational agriculture utilized by the teacher-training institution in giving trainees in agricultural education on-the-job experience in the duties and responsibilities of a high school teacher of agriculture.

Procedure In Obtaining Data

A check list was prepared for the purpose of obtaining opinions of teacher trainers and the practices they were following in the selection of student-teaching centers. This check list was sent to six teacher trainers throughout the United States for suggestions on its revision prior to its use as a data-gathering device. After suggested revisions had been made, the check list, accompanied by a letter of transmittal, was sent to each teacher-training institution that trains teachers of vocational agriculture requesting opinions and procedures followed in the selection of student-teaching centers.

Although the whole staff at a teacher-training institution may have cooperated in responding to the check list, their responses were recorded as one reply. Thus, the fifty-one teacher trainers who responded provided the replies from fifty-one teacher-training institutions.

A tentative set of criteria, formulated by the writer after securing initial data on the subject, was applied to the student-teaching programs at Louisiana State University, Michigan State College, The Ohio State University, and the University of Illinois by personal visits to each of these institutions. At this time, some criteria were added, some were deleted, and others were modified.

The criteria as revised were sent then to a jury of educators for concurrence, non-concurrence, and comments. This group of educators included teacher trainers in vocational agriculture, teacher trainers in general education, state supervisors of vocational agriculture, superintendents of schools, high school principals, and high school supervising teachers in vocational agriculture.

Summary

Forty-nine criteria were reported desirable for student-teaching centers in vocational agriculture and twenty criteria

were reported minimum essentials for student-teaching centers by 80 per cent or more of the seventy-five educators who reacted to the suggested criteria. All of these criteria are reported under the section of this report entitled CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Several criteria were considered desirable for student-teaching centers by less than 80 per cent of the educators. These criteria are:

1. Clerical assistance is provided for the teacher of agriculture.
2. Special advisory committees are used for activities such as young-farmer classes, Future Farmers of America, and adult classes.
3. There is a separate building or wing of the high school building for housing the agricultural department.
4. The following items are a part of the facilities of the department of agriculture:
   a) Technical literature of a wide variety and in sufficient quantities for use as reference by the agriculture classes.
   b) A comprehensive collection of specimens, charts, etc. for teaching aids.
   c) Films, film strips, slides, and other visual aids with devices for projecting them.
   d) Small tools and equipment are available for teaching milk testing, pruning, dehorning, castrating, and similar activities.
5. Student-teaching centers are located in *every* major farming area in the state.
6. Student-teaching centers are grouped in clusters.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The author has concluded that there is a relatively small

number of criteria which should be considered minimum essentials for student-teaching centers in vocational agriculture and a somewhat larger number of criteria which are desirable for student-teaching centers. He recommends the following criteria as minimum essentials for student-teaching centers:

1. Criteria which 80 per cent or more of the educators believed were minimum essentials:

a) The local school administrative staff is willing to expend time and energy to facilitate vocational agriculture and the student-teaching program.

b) Student teachers have the privilege of participating in all activities of the department of agriculture.

c) A majority of the educational activities in the local program of vocational agriculture in the high school are related to the actual farm experiences of the pupils.

d) A majority of the enterprises of the students are carried through to completion.

e) Supervised farming records are kept up-to-date.

f) Supervised farming programs, classroom instruction, and F.F.A. activities are conducted in a manner conducive to efficiency in farming.

g) Agricultural facilities on local farms are utilized in the instructional program (both individual and group instruction).

h) The supervising teacher is interested in student teachers, their problems and ambitions.

i) The supervising teacher is willing to cooperate with the resident teacher trainers in carrying out the student-teaching program.

j) The supervising teacher is a man of mature judgment.

k) The supervising teacher possesses the integrity and character to inspire the respect of trainees, students, and his associates.

l) The supervising teacher maintains good working relationships:
   (1) in the department of vocational agriculture
   (2) in the school
   (3) in the community
   (4) with the state supervisory staff
   (5) with other agricultural agencies in the community

m) The supervising teacher is a man who is improving himself professionally.

n) The supervising teacher actively participates in educational activities of the community.

o) The supervising teacher is concerned with the farmer as a social being.

p) Teaching is the primary interest and activity of the supervising teacher.

q) The classroom is used primarily for agricultural classwork.

r) The classroom is large enough for all normal agricultural classes.

s) The classroom contains adequate lighting (natural and artificial), heat, blackboard, seating capacity, and desk facilities.

t) Technical literature of a wide variety is available in sufficient quantities for use as reference by the agriculture classes.

2. Criteria which the author recommends as minimum essentials for student-teaching centers, but which the evidence secured does not clearly indicate that they should be so con-

sidered are:

a) The local program of vocational agriculture includes a program of instruction for adults.

b) Eighty per cent or more of the class time of the teacher of agriculture is devoted to vocational agriculture.

Some justification for the recommendation of these two criteria are:

The author made the premise, at the outset, that an adult program in vocational agriculture is one of the duties of a teacher of agriculture.

The United States Office of Education recognizes that providing education for farmers is a part of the program in vocational agricultural education.

The National Vocational Education Acts imply that there should be training for adult farmers.

Over 84 per cent of the teacher trainers of agricultural education consider the adult-farmer program when they select student-teaching centers; and 92.1 per cent believe they should do so.

Over 74 per cent of the teacher trainers of vocational agriculture consider the young-farmer program when they select student-teaching centers; and 88.2 per cent believe they should do so.

These teacher trainers gave a median rating of four to the type of adult-farmer program in operation and the same rating to the type of young-farmer program in operation, as considerations for the selection of student-teaching centers.

Virtually all agricultural educators reported as a minimum essential either 80 per cent or 100 per cent as the minimum amount of time for the teacher of agriculture to devote to vocational agriculture.

Comments from several general educators indicate that the

question was misunderstood by them.

Forty of the forty-nine teacher trainers in vocational agricultural education who gave usable replies reported some figure between 80 per cent and 100 per cent as the minimum amount of time a teacher of agriculture should devote to vocational agriculture in an ideal situation in their own states.

Based upon the favorable response of 80 per cent or more of the educators used as a jury, the author recommends the following criteria as desirable for student-teaching centers:

1. There are good working relationships between the local school administrator and the local board of education.

2. There are good working relationships between the local school administrator and the high school teaching staff.

3. The local board of education is willing to expend time and energy to facilitate vocational agriculture and the student-teaching program.

4. The local high school faculty is desirous of having student teachers in their school.

5. Student teachers have the privileges similar to those of the regular members of the staff to participate in faculty meetings, committee activities, and other activities.

6. The local high school faculty and high school students work together effectively in solving common problems.

7. The local school participates in curriculum improvement programs through research activities.

8. The high school staff participates actively in community affairs.

9. The local school provides maximum services for its staff such as systematic salary schedules, sick leave, and a professional library.

10. Pupils are provided an opportunity to participate in planning their learning activities.

11. Specific objectives are set up by the classes for their learning activities.

12. Evaluation is an integral part of the teaching-learning activities.

13. Pupils participate in the evaluation of their own achievements.

14. The results of evaluations are made the basis for planning further instruction.

15. Individual differences of pupils are considered in selecting, planning, and conducting learning experiences.

16. Instructional activities are integrated whenever possible with other subject matter areas of the pupils.

17. The agricultural program is coordinated with the total educational program of the school.

18. The agricultural program is coordinated with the total educational program of the community.

19. The program is broad enough to provide a variety of experiences in all phases of the educational program in vocational agriculture (the all-day, out-of-school youth, adult-farmers).

20. Instruction is based upon an analysis of pupil and community needs.

21. All instruction is coordinated with broad programs of supervised farming.

22. All-day classes contain a great majority of boys interested in farming.

23. All-day classes largely contain boys who are carrying broad supervised farming programs appropriate for the community.

24. There is a minimum of all-day students whose fitness for the curriculum in vocational agriculture is doubtful in

terms of individual interests and opportunities for participating on a vocational basis.

25. The teacher of agriculture plays a major role in the guidance and selection of prospective students.

26. Enrollments in the all-day class program is at least twenty-five students.

27. The number of all-day classes in the department of agriculture is at least two.

28. There is an active Future Farmers of America chapter.

29. The Future Farmers of America chapter program of work is integrated with the supervised farming program and with classroom instruction.

30. The department of vocational agriculture has a general advisory council.

31. There is an operating budget which allows for acquisition and maintenance of equipment and supplies for a well-rounded program of vocational agriculture.

32. A means of transportation is available for field trips which is economical with respect to cost.

33. There are numerous evidences in the community of the results of the educational program in vocational agriculture.

34. Supervising teachers have time available for follow-up of first-year teachers of agriculture.

35. The supervising teacher actively participates in social activites of the community.

36. The classroom has a suitable means for darkening the room for the showing of motion pictures, film strips, and similar visual aids.

37. The classroom is free from distracting noises (within and without).

38. The agricultural classroom has a display or exhibit area.

39. The quality of facilities and equipment in the department of agriculture equals that found in the better departments in the state.

40. There is a farm mechanics shop adequate in size and equipment for teaching skills needed by farmers and prospective farmers of the school community.

41. A conference room large enough for committee meetings and individual and small group conferences is available in addition to the classroom.

42. There are available a comprehensive collection of specimens, charts, etc. for teaching aids.

43. There are available films, film strips, slides, and other visual aids with devices for projecting them.

44. Small tools and equipment are available for teaching milk testing, pruning, castrating, dehorning, and similar activities.

45. All teaching materials are cataloged and filed for ease of use and subsequent filing.

46. There is a wide variety of professional literature available in the school.

47. The state supervisory staff is consulted in the selection of student-teaching centers.

48. Student-teaching centers are distributed throughout the state to the extent that it is possible to provide adequate supervision at an economical cost.

49. Housing facilities are available in the community for student teachers.

VITA

James Christian Atherton was born August 4, 1915 at Bolivar, Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana. He attended elementary and high schools in Tangipahoa Parish and was graduated from high school in 1931. In the fall of 1931 he enrolled in the College of Agriculture of Louisiana State University and received his Bachelor of Science Degree from that institution in 1935.

In July 1935 he accepted the position of teacher of agriculture in the Loranger High School, Loranger, Louisiana, which position he held until July 1940 when he accepted a similar position in the Independence High School, Independence, Louisiana. In July 1941 he returned to his former position as teacher of agriculture in the Loranger High School. He was called to active duty in the armed forces January 24, 1942 where he served over forty-seven months as an officer in the Army. He now holds a rank of Major in the active reserves.

While on terminal leave from the Army in November 1945, he accepted a position as teacher of agriculture in the Hammond High School, Hammond, Louisiana. In July 1946 he returned to the Loranger High School as principal and teacher of agriculture. He held this position for two years. In 1947 he received the Master of Science Degree from Louisiana State University. During the school years 1940-1941, 1946-1947, and 1947-1948 he was a supervising teacher in the student-teaching program in vocational agriculture conducted by Louisiana State University. He served three months, June, July and August 1948, in the grade of Major in the Intelligence and Security Division of the San Francisco Port of Embarkation.

He enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Illinois in September 1948 and received the Master of Education Degree from that institution in August 1949.